

Costermans, L. (1981). 'Native Trees and Shrubs of South Eastern Australia,' pp. 422, more than 300 colour photographs and 160 in black and white line drawings. (Published by Rigby, Adelaide). Hard-bound, \$29.95.

E.J. McAlister
Adelaide Botanic Gardens

Two books on the flora of New South Wales

Cunningham, G.M. et al. 'Plants of western New South Wales', 1982, N.S.W. Government Printer.

Jacobs, S.W.L. & Pickard, J. 'Plants of New South Wales', 1981, N.S.W. Government Printer.

The latest of the floras to deal with at least a part of New South Wales is a most impressive volume by G.M. Cunningham, W.E. Mulham, P.L. Milthorpe and J.H. Leigh. Aimed "particularly at the landholders" of western New South Wales it is more popular in approach than most floras, but will be welcomed by others including many professional botanists. Of particular value will be the outstanding colour photographs of the great majority of the approximately 2,000 vascular plant species included. Exceptionally informative notes, especially of an ecological nature, were made possible by the authors' considerable first hand field knowledge. The opportunities to include such notes are too rarely available to writers of floras, although most would appreciate the value in having them.

The presentation and printing are very good, but I find it difficult to refer from the text of a species to its associated photograph. This is partly because only the vernacular name is used as a caption, partly because it is printed in small lower case—very different from the large bold capitals used in the headings to the text—and partly because it is sometimes above and sometimes below the plate.

Reflecting to some extent its differences in emphasis from most other floras, several technical decisions in the book will not find favour with many botanists. As the authors predicted in their introduction many users will, for example, regret the absence of keys. The apparent fabrication and "standardisation" of "common names" will also be criticised (as occurred when J.H. Willis adopted the Victorian Naturalists vernacular names in his 'Handbook'), as will the use of lower case for their initial letters, even when used as captions. For example, "paterson's curse" will look strange to many. In writing descriptions for the lay public, terminology is a major problem. However, who has the courage and knowledge to tackle descriptions of details of grass inflorescences yet prefers to use the word "seeds" for lemmas, "husks" for glumes or "flowers" for spikelets? Numerous alternative "common names" are recorded but users attempting to look up species by botanical names other than those adopted in the book will fail to find any scientific synonyms.

In their introduction the authors emphasise the part played by S.W.L. Jacobs and J. Pickard's checklist of the plants of New South Wales. They used it as a guide to what species are naturalised, to the "form of presentation" of authors of plant names and to distribution outside their own area. Both works are dated 1981 (although the "Plants of western N.S.W." did not actually appear until 1982) and the reader might be excused for assuming that the names adopted would also have been checked against the checklist. This was unfortunately, at least in part, not the case. Perhaps the most serious omission which use of the checklist could have avoided, was the failure to change *Bassia* (of which 30 species are described in the flora) to *Sclerolaena* or *Dissocarpus*, a change widely

accepted since A.J. Scott's publication of 1978. It could also have avoided adoption of the unpublished combination *Bulbinopsis alata* for a species validly published in *Bulbine* by H. Baijnath, in which genus most recent authors have agreed to place the taxon.

The checklist 'Plants of New South Wales' is also, in its own way, a lavish publication, perhaps in this case excessively so. This is the first comprehensive record of the seed plants of New South Wales in 65 years and, as such, fills a need felt, not only by workers in that State, but by others especially those involved in the floras of adjoining areas. The occurrence of each taxon (approximately 6,000 species) on Lord Howe Island and in 13 mainland N.S.W. regions is recorded. Although the occurrence of species in other States and overseas is also indicated, this information is, as the authors indicate, "not necessarily definitive". In fact a check of South Australian monocotyledons, for which a reasonable list was available to the authors, suggests that it is so bad as to have been better omitted.

Additional information is limited to whether or not the taxon is native (indicated not only for the State as a whole but also for each of the 14 regions) and the inclusion of a substantial number of synonyms. The families, genera and species recognised are arranged alphabetically, and the index is, therefore, justifiably restricted to family and generic names whether adopted or as synonyms. It is not stated on which system the family concepts are based. Perhaps some freedom was allowed the 15 contributors in the groups for which they were responsible.

Except for the interstate distribution data this is, in so far as I have been able to check, a very reliable and valuable addition to the literature on the Australian flora.

Cunningham, G.M., Mulham, W.E., Milthorpe, P.L. & Leigh, J.H. 1982 (dated 1981). 'Plants of western New South Wales', pp. 766, figures 67, colour plates approximately 1490, 1 map (endpapers). (Published by the N.S.W. Government Printing Office in association with the Soil Conservation Service of N.S.W., Sydney). Hard-bound.

Jacobs, S.W.L. & Pickard, J. 1981. 'Plants of New South Wales. A census of the cyads, conifers and angiosperms', pp. 226, 1 map (endpapers). (Published by D. West, Government Printer, Sydney). Hard-bound. \$18.00.

J.P. Jessop
State Herbarium of South Australia.